

**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES - DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH**

**HOUSING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

**GUIDELINES/PROCEDURES**

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**1.0 PURPOSE:**

- 1.1 To provide a description of the Housing Assistance Program (HAP) and the eligibility criteria for each component.
- 1.2 To provide the process and procedures for implementing the program.

**2.0 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:**

- 2.1 The Housing Assistance Program (HAP) provides a variety of funding sources to assist homeless consumers of mental health services without the financial resources to afford the move-in costs associated with moving into permanent housing such as paying the security deposit and/or deposit for utility services; purchasing household goods needed to start a home, and; making minor renovations, expansions and/or repairs of identified housing. In addition, HAP provides resources to avoid an eviction due to an unexpected financial hardship.
- 2.2 The program is composed of five components: Security Deposit, Utility Assistance, Rehabilitation, Household Goods, and Eviction Prevention assistance for consumers who are moving into permanent housing from homelessness.

**3.0 GENERAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA:**

Applicants must meet all of the following eligibility criteria:

- 3.1 Homeless as defined by the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development.<sup>1</sup>
- 3.2 Homeless with a mental illness and receiving mental health services from a Department of Mental Health (DMH) directly operated or contracted agency.
- 3.3 Enrolled in or receiving services from programs other than a Full Service Partnership Program or similar programs with Clients Supportive Services funding.
- 3.4 Proof of sufficient income to reasonably sustain the monthly expenses associated with maintaining permanent housing including but not limited to rental cost, utilities, and food.<sup>2</sup> Proof of income should be dated within 60 days.

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- 3.5 Capable of living independently as assessed by the referring entity.
- 3.6 Eligibility is limited to once every twelve months for move-in or eviction prevention assistance with an approved justification. Financial assistance for household goods is limited to a lifetime allocation of \$1000.
- 3.7 Recipient of a Section 8, Shelter Plus Care or other housing subsidy (desirable but not mandatory.)
- 3.8 An applicant moving into housing from homelessness is allowed up to 90 days after moving into housing to remain eligible for the various program components.

**4.0 PROGRAM COMPONENTS and OTHER ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA:**

- 4.1 **Security Deposit** provides financial assistance for applicants who are homeless and in the process of acquiring rental housing and do not have the means to pay the required security deposit at the time of leasing the unit. California Law restricts the total security deposit to be no more than two times the monthly rent unless the unit is furnished allowing up to three times the monthly rent. However, Housing Policy & Development Unit (HP&D) will only authorize payment for the amount stated on the Letter of Determination, Lease Approval (from the City or the County Housing Authority) or signed lease.
- 4.1.1 Tenant's ratio of household income to agreed monthly rent cannot be at or above 70% in order to qualify for a security deposit.
- 4.1.2 If an applicant is required to utilize 70% or more of their documented monthly income for their monthly rent, the case manager must submit a letter, signed by the case manager and program manager, explaining how the applicant will be able to maintain the rental unit and other related expenses. This letter must accompany the application packet; otherwise, the application packet will be rejected. You must resubmit the entire application packet with the missing letter.
- 4.1.3 If the applicant is a recipient of a federal rental subsidy, the application packet must include the Letter of Determination or the Lease Approval from the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles or the Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles respectively.
- 4.1.4 Upon receipt of the application, the referring agency will be notified within 3 working days that the application was received and if there are any incomplete or missing documents. If the application packet is incomplete or missing documents, the application packet will be rejected. You must

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resubmit the entire application packet with the missing documents or completed forms.

- 4.1.5 Security Deposits paid for consumers remain the property of the Department. That is, the Department has the sole discretion to allow the consumer to use the funds for their next unit or have the deposit amount returned to the Department.
- 4.2 **Utility Assistance** provides funds for a required deposit to establishing utility services/connection for individual/family transitioning from homelessness.
- 4.2.1 Case Managers/Housing Specialists will be required to submit a copy of the bill with the tenant's name along with the request for utility application form. If the name of the bill is different from the name on the housing assistance application, a letter of explanation signed by the Program Head/Program Manager should be submitted with the application packet.
- 4.2.2 The utility payment will be mailed directly to the utility company on behalf of the applicant.
- 4.2.3 If the payment is not mailed directly to the utility company, an agency representative **MUST** accompany the applicant when paying for utility services. **NO** check(s) shall be given directly to the applicant, under any circumstances.
- 4.3 **Rehabilitation/Repairs** provides funds for mandatory minor repairs to housing units to provide or improve access to the units, ensure the unit is in compliance with housing quality standards stipulated by local housing authorities, and/or to eliminate health or safety hazards. The program assists with preserving the quality of affordable housing for individuals who live in dwellings where the owner cannot immediately afford to pay for necessary repairs to their home such as:
- 4.3.1 Individuals who obtained Section 8 Vouchers or Shelter Plus Care Certificates and are ready to move into housing but the unit did not pass inspection by the Housing Authority due to requests for minor modifications or repairs.
- 4.3.2 Individuals who requests upgrade to their homes to meet their physical and mobility needs but the property owner is not able to immediately meet those needs due to hardship.

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4.4 **Household Goods** provides financial assistance with purchasing necessary household items such as appliances and furnishings for applicants who are moving into permanent housing from homelessness. *Financial assistance for household goods is not allowable for persons who are relocating from one independent living situation to another.* However, if a non-homeless and/or relocating applicant is in need of household goods due to extenuating circumstances, the case manager/housing specialist may submit a letter, signed by the case manager/housing specialist and program manager, explaining the extenuating situation. Each situation will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

4.4.1 Eligible applicants will receive a lifetime allocation or one-time maximum amount of \$1,000.

4.4.2 Allowable purchases under this program component are indicated below along with recommended pricing guidelines. If a specific item is not included, the referring agency may submit a letter explaining why the item is needed. Each request will be reviewed by Brilliant Corners staff on a case-by-case basis.

Furniture		Appliances		Kitchenware		Linen		Other	
Full Size Bedroom Set (including mattress/box spring)	*\$470	Stove	*\$425	Plates	*\$35	Sheets	\$19	Mop	\$5
Couch Coffee and End Tables	*\$439	Refrigerator	*\$550	Flatware	*\$16	Towels	\$50	Broom	\$5
Lamp (up to 2)	\$20	Microwave	*\$99	Glasses	*\$15	Pillows	\$10	Shower Curtain	\$5
Dining Table w/chairs (up to 4 chairs)	*\$189	Vacuum Cleaner	*\$60	Cooking Utensils	*\$20	Blanket	\$60		
		Television	*\$300	Pots & Pans	\$40				

#### 4.4.3 Merchant Invoicing:

4.4.3.1 Present pre-selected items detailed on a merchant's invoice with the total purchase price including taxes and other associated fees with the application for household goods.

4.4.3.2 If the invoiced items and amount are approved, a check will be generated and mailed to the case manager/housing specialist or the vendor.

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4.4.3.3 If the vendor received the check directly from Brilliant Corners, the vendor will provide written verification that the merchandise was delivered and received by the intended client.

4.4.3.4 If the case manager/housing specialist is delivering/sending the check to the vendor, he/she is responsible for obtaining a copy of the shipping receipt with the client's signature. The case manager/housing specialist must deliver or email a scanned copy to Brilliant Corners within one week of delivery.

4.4.3.5 Checks are **NOT** to be given directly to the applicant.

**4.4.4 Purchasing with A Pre-Issued Check**

4.4.4.1 NO CHECK(S) shall be given directly to the applicant.

4.4.4.2 When purchasing household goods, the case manager/housing specialist can only purchase those items that were submitted with the application and were pre-approved for purchase. In situations where an item is no longer available, the case manager/housing specialist will assist the applicant with finding a comparable item for equal or less value.

4.4.4.3 When utilizing a check for payment, if the pre-approved items cost less than the amount approved, the case manager must return all change with the receipt(s) to Brilliant Corners.

4.4.4.4 The original receipt or scanned copy must be submitted to Brilliant Corners within one week of purchase reflecting the pre-approved items.

Receipts will be reviewed to ensure only pre-approved items were purchased. If there are inconsistencies, the case manager/housing specialist will be contacted to provide a written explanation. Therefore, please submit your written explanations for discrepancies with the receipts.

4.5 **Eviction Prevention** provides a one-time payment of one month's rental in arrears and any reasonable late fees as indicated in the lease agreement for households that are at risk of eviction. The payment, to the property owner, is only made to avert an eviction.

4.5.1 Payments cannot be more than one month in arrears.

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4.5.2 Applicant must have been served with an eviction notice – 3 or 30-day notice.

4.5.3 Applicant must provide proof of occupancy for at a minimum of 6 months at that address indicated on his/her/their lease agreement or utility bill.

4.5.4 Applicant must be able to show proof of sufficient monthly income to maintain the regular monthly rents subsequent to the one-time intervention.

**5.0 PROCEDURES:**

5.1 The Housing Assistance Program is administered by Brilliant Corners under the oversight of the Housing Policy and Development (HP&D) Unit within Countywide Housing, Employment, & Education Resource Development Division (CHEERD). Responsibilities and duties will include but not be limited to the following:

5.1.1 Referring Clinic/Agency:

5.1.1.1 Develop policies and standards of how the program will be implemented in their specific clinics with a designated contact person.

5.1.1.2 Conduct housing searches to assist with the identification of potential housing options.

5.1.1.3 Negotiate with property owners to obtain a reasonable security deposit and such deposit shall not exceed two times the requested monthly rent); accept a third party payment through the Department of Mental Health or its agent with a completed W9 form; and avert evictions.

5.1.1.4 Negotiate with merchants to become a vendor of the County of Los Angeles and to accept third payment on behalf of the applicants.

5.1.1.5 Obtain required documentation from local housing authorities to confirm federal housing subsidies.

5.1.1.6 Complete the application packet.

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5.1.1.7 Emailing the completed application packet to **Lauren Garcia** at [lgarcia@brilliantcorners.org](mailto:lgarcia@brilliantcorners.org) through the encrypted email system.

5.1.2 Brilliant Corners

5.1.2.1 Review all HAP application packets to determine if the packet is complete and includes all the required documents to process the applicant's request.

5.1.2.2 Contact the referring agency within three workdays of receipt of application packet to acknowledge receipt and report any incomplete or missing documents. If the packet is incomplete or missing documents, the application packet will be reject. Inform the case manager/housing specialist that they must resubmit the entire application packet with the corrected or missing documents.

5.1.2.3 Enter information from the Housing Assistance Program (HAP) applications into the DMH's database.

5.1.1.1 Generate the Approval Request Report from DMH's database and email to Arthur Poghosyan at [apoghosyan@dmh.lacounty.gov](mailto:apoghosyan@dmh.lacounty.gov). and other designated staff each Friday.

5.1.1.2 Forward payment requests to the Brilliant Corner's Accounting Division for processing.

5.1.1.3 Reconcile printed checks and mail to case manager/housing specialist or vendors as indicated.

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<sup>1</sup> Not applicable to the Eviction Prevention Components

<sup>2</sup> Monthly rental amount should not exceed 70% of documented monthly income